



Nehemiah 11-12

# CELEBRATING GOD'S GOODNESS!

*Don't stop singing! Sing this afternoon. Sing on your way home from work! One of the most exuberant expressions of a happy heart is a singing mouth. I'm impressed with the fact that Nehemiah 12:43 does not say the song was heard from afar. It says, "the joy was heard from afar." That encourages me! People don't hear the lips and the words, they hear the joy of the heart. ...People are starved happiness. When it's expressed in any authentic manner, they are greatly encouraged. One great application pours out of these verses: Happiness is not dependent on outward circumstances but upon inward focus. When you have focused correctly, you can smile and sing through any experience.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

Nehemiah focus on three great themes:

1. Rebuilding the Temple (Ezra)
2. Rebuilding the Wall (Nehemiah 1-6)
3. Rebuilding the People (Nehemiah 7-13)

After rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem...with such a great experience of unity...Nehemiah organizes a huge celebration and dedication of the work. The walls are a visible testimony of God's protection, provision, and goodness to them. It is not only appropriate to celebrate but also vital and necessary.

Leading up to this dedication, Nehemiah first repopulated the city with "volunteers" who were selected by lot (11:1-2). He also worked to organize the city and the temple for worship by making sure that the proper leaders, priests, and Levites were appointed in place (11:3-12:26). Now it is time to celebrate!

**IT IS GOOD TO \_\_\_\_\_ OURSELVES  
TO THE LORD SO THAT WE MAY SERVE HIM (12:30).**

The Levites and the priests gathered together in Jerusalem for the dedication of the wall and then they purified themselves, probably through washing, anointing, and/or the sprinkling of sacrificial blood (cf. Lev. 8:1-30; 14:1-32).

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)*

*Ezra and Nehemiah were originally a single book with one overarching argument. The book is structured in four movements that address successive stages of a common theme: the manner whereby the people of God rebuilt the house of God. But rebuilding the house of God is not limited to rebuilding the temple. It also involves restoration of full spiritual vitality to the people of God.*

—George Van Pelt Campbell

*Nehemiah, seeing that the city had a small population, urged the priests and the Levites...to move to the city and remain there, for he had prepared houses for them at his own expense. —Josephus (AD 37-100)*

*A Christian is a sanctified man in his business, legal or civic affairs, or artistic and literary affairs. Consecration is...the giving over of ourselves to God, letting His providence place us where He will—in business or law or science; in worship, in politics, or in drudgery. We are to be there working according to the laws and principles of the Kingdom of God. —Oswald Chambers*

**IT IS GOOD TO \_\_\_\_\_ OUR WORK TO THE LORD AS A TESTIMONY OF HIS GRACE (12:27).**

Just as the first and second temples were dedicated to the Lord (cf. 1 Kings 8, Ezra 6:16-18), so now the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem is dedicated to Him as well (cf. 12:40; Psalm 147).

When our hands complete a work, done for God's glory and by His grace, it is good to dedicate it to the Lord and ask Him to bless it and use it for His purposes (cf. Deut. 20:5; 1 Kgs. 7:51; Prov. 16:3).

**IT IS GOOD TO \_\_\_\_\_ WITH GREAT JOY AS WE REFLECT ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD (12:31-43).**

- They celebrated with \_\_\_\_\_.

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord,  
to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;  
To declare Your steadfast love in the morning,  
and Your faithfulness by night,  
To the music of the lute and the harp,  
to the melody of the lyre.  
For You, O LORD, have made me glad by Your work;  
at the works of Your hands I sing for joy. (Psalm 92:1-4)*

- They celebrated with \_\_\_\_\_.

*Oh sing to the Lord a new song;  
Sing to the Lord, all the earth!  
Sing to the Lord, bless His name;  
Tell of His salvation from day to day. (Psalm 96:1-2)*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16)*

- They celebrated with \_\_\_\_\_.

*Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet!  
Praise Him with the lute and harp!  
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance!  
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!  
Praise Him with loud cymbals!  
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!  
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord!*

*Every inch of these ramparts had its special memory for one group or another. —Derek Kidner*

**Thanksgiving.** Hebrew, *todah*, "praise, confession, thanksgiving (with extended hands)."

**Two large thanksgiving choirs (12:31).** Literally, "two great thanksgivings." "These choirs were the embodiment of what they sang" (Kidner).

*I have no use for cranks who despise music because it is the gift of God. Next after theology, I give to music the highest place and the greatest honor. —Martin Luther*

*Every generation needs new songs coming from the hearts of those experiencing the grace of God, along with the best of the old, to express its faith. —Milo Thompson*

*Keep up the freshness of worship. Let us not present old worn-out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart, into every song, since we have new mercies every day, and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord. —Charles H. Spurgeon*

*Praise God with a strong faith; praise Him with holy love and delight; praise Him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise Him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise Him by rejoicing in His love and resting in His great goodness; praise Him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of His grace; praise Him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of His glory. —Matthew Henry*